to assist in the technological development on this, and to encourage those concerns that would be ready to go in for coal gasification. But the scope for that is relatively limited, as compared to the demand for gas in the Eastern and the North-Eastern region. Now, to meet that, one possibility is to be able to get the gas from Myanmar, where, in a particular block on the coast, we have succeeded, through the OVL, in finding our own equity gas. The problem is one of transmitting it into the eastern India through Bangladesh. And, by merely saying that, you will appreciate the difficulties that we face in this regard. Also to connect to what I was asked a little earlier by Mr. Narayanan, we would be more than happy to see the LNG terminals coming up on the East coast, whether in the South-East coast or further up in the Bay of Bengal. But that requires tying up suppliers. And, I know that IOC and others are deeply involved in trying to get this to come to financial closure, to come to a final stage of implementations as well as tying up with who are the consumers who will do it. Now, in this connection, the pipelines that are, now, being laid could eventually add up to a national grid.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please be brief.

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: But, for the moment, we don't have a national grid. We have a number of new pipelines, being laid. And, we hope that eventually this would add up to a national grid.

Debt relief to farmers

*208.PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA†:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry of Finance after declaring measures/package for agriculture, has directed the States to work out targets for boosting loan credit and provide debt relief to distressed farmers;

(b) if so, whether Chief Ministers of States have been urged to implement action plan announced by the Central Government;

(c) if so, whether Government are confident that measures announced will only be implemented with the cooperation of State Governments; and

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Prof. Alka Balram Kshatriya.

(d) if so, what is the progress so far made by States and how many States have agreed to meet the target fixed in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): A Statement is placed on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) Pursuant to the announcement made by the Government on 18th June, 2004, for increasing the ground level credit flow to Agriculture and allied activities by 30% during 2004-05 and doubling the flow in 3 years, Chief Ministers of all States have been requested on 10th June, 2004 to take appropriate measures at their level for implementing the policy. The main tasks required to be taken by State, District and lower levels were indicated to the Chief Ministers as follows:

(i) Finalization of operational targets in consultation with local offices of NABARD and Banks in State and District Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) meetings. These meeting must be held before June 30, 2004.

(ii) Assistance for formulation of new bankable investment projects like plantation, horticulture, fisheries, organic farming, agro-processing and other agricultural activities in the jurisdiction of each rural and semi-urban branch of commercial banks;

(iii) Furnishing necessary certificates/documents to tenant farmers oral lessees and share croppers to enable them to access institutional credit;

(iv) Providing the information requested for by banks, for purposes of debt relief;

(v) energising and helping cooperatives in the State to participate in this endeavour fully; and

(vi) Advising District Collectors to ensure that the District Level Technical Committees urgently review the scales of finance to meet the realistic credit needs of farmers.

(c) and (d) Close cooperation and involvement of the State Governments at all levels is absolutely essential for the successful implementation of the package announced by the Government. Responses

received from States and steps taken so far towards implementing the policy have been quite encouraging.

प्रो॰ अलका क्षत्रिय: सभापति महोदय, मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहती हूं कि वर्ष 2003-2004 में राज्यों द्वारा कृषि ऋण में वृद्धि करने और संकटग्रस्त किसानों को ऋण में राहत प्रदान करने के लिए कितना लक्ष्य निर्धारित किया गया था और हकीकत में ऋण में कितनी वृद्धि हुई है तथा कितनी राहतें प्रदान की गयी है? साथ ही वर्ष 2004-2005 में इसके लिए कितना लक्ष्य निर्धारित किया गया है और गुजरात राज्य का क्या लक्ष्य निर्धारित किया गया है?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, this question relates to the package announced on the 18th June, 2004. There are targets fixed for the whole country. There are no State-wise targets. The target for credit flow in 2004-05 was about Rs. 1,04,500/- crores; divided between commercial banks- Rs. 57,000 crores, regional rural banks- Rs. 8,500 crores, and cooperative banks- Rs. 39,000 crores. There are no State-wise targets. Banks, commercial banks and regional rural banks, and cooperative banks, have branches in all parts of the country. They will try to lend to as many farmers as possible. Our hope is to add another fifty lakh farmers, and bring them under the institutional credit.

प्रो॰ अलका क्षत्रिय: ग्रामीण ऋण पैकेज और संकटग्रस्त किसानों को नया ऋण किस तरह से दिया जाए, इसकी चर्चा के लिए इंडियन बैंक एसोसिएशन के चेयरमैन, नाबार्ड के चेयरपर्सन की क्या वित्त मंत्री के साथ कोई मीटिंग हुई थी? इंडियन बैंक एसोसिएशन ने क्या कोई सुझाव दिए थे? यदि दिए थे तो वे सुझाव क्या हैं और इस बारे में सरकार का क्या रवैया है? साथ ही मैं बताना चाहती हूं कि गुजरात में...

श्री सभापति: अब बताने की ज़रूरत नहीं है।

प्रो॰ अलका क्षत्रिय: सर, गुजरात की बात है। गुजरात के 19 जिलों में सूखे की परिस्थिति है और इसके लिए माननीय प्रधान मंत्री जी से गुजरात के कांग्रेस के MPs और MLAs का एक delegation भी मिला था और कुछ मदद मांगी थी। उसके बारे में मंत्री जी क्या सोच रहे हैं, यह बता दें।

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, this policy package was devised after talking to the Chairman, NABARD, Governor, RBI, and the Chairmen of the Indian Bank's Association as well as several Chairman-cum-Managing Directors of major banks. We think that this package can be implemented. The Banks think that this package can be implemented. In fact, the follow-up action has been taken. I wrote to all the Chief Ministers the next day. And many States, I am happy to say, have already held their first

State Level Bankers' Committee meeting. And in many States, for example, in the State of Gujarat, which the hon. Member is referring to, the Chief Minister presided over the meeting of the SLBC on the 1st July, 2004.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, we are extremely happy that our hon. Finance Minister has come out with plans in a very revolutionary way; in a very aggressive way, to help the poor farmers by enhancing the credit inflow by 30 per cent, that is, by enhancing it to about Rs. 25,000 crores. The Finance Minister has got a very ambitious plan for farmers, which is to be achieved before the year 2005. But, practically, what we find is that it is very difficult for small and poor farmers to take loans from banks and institutions. So, I would like to know what concrete or scientific mechanism the Finance Ministry is contemplating so that his great and ambitious credit plan could reach common farmers before the year, 2005. It is a very ambitious plan.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Mr. Chairman, Sir, as I said, this can only be done if everybody pulls his weight, including the hon. Members of Parliament. The Chief Ministers of all the States must take interest at the SLBC meeting, and the District Collectors must take interest at the district level meeting. I have already instructed the District Collectors through the Indian Banks' Association and NABARD that hon. Members of Parliament must be invited to the district level meetings in order to monitor the progress of the agricultural credit package. I have asked the banks to appoint an exclusive officer, at the level of a General Manager, to monitor the flow of agricultural credit. I have already requested the hon. Members, last time I answered a question here, to please visit their constituencies and tell me whether banks are active. I myself intend to travel to four or five States during the inter-Session period to monitor whether this package is being implemented or not.

SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Sir, the second portion of part (a) of the question deals with providing debt relief to distressed farmers. Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether there is any proposal with the Government of India to waive the loans of distressed farmers. The second thing is about energising and helping the cooperatives in the States. Sir, I want to know from the hon. Minister as to how many cooperative units at the district level are sick, and whether notices are issued under Section 11. How are you going to revive them?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, if I recall right, I think, about 140 district-level cooperative banks are under section 11. Reviving them is a

very complex process. We are attending to the issue and the RBI and NABARD are engaged in it. so, I can't give an off-hand answer unless we draw some conclusions. Sir, we have given debt relief. There is no proposal at the moment to do a debt write-off. My earnest request, Sir, is let us give this package a fair trial. Let us review the matter after about three-four months.

SHRI LALITBHAI MEHTA: The Minister has already replied that nearly 140 banks are in red. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the previous Government had made any special package or provision in the last Budget to the tune of Rs. 8000 crores for the revival of these district cooperative banks, including the urban cooperative banks. If so, whether any progress has been made in this matter and which are the proposals that the Ministry has received. How many banks have been helped?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, there was a proposal to restructure the finances of cooperative banks. I have, in my Budget speech, said that we will appoint a task force which should be asked to give its report by 31st of october. I am in the process of appointing that task force. Further action on the previous Government's proposal as well as what we have in mind can only be taken after the task force report is received by 31st of October. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI LALITBHAI MEHTA: whether those proposals have been processed and examined. ...(*Interruptions*)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question. Question No. 209; Shrimati Sarla Maheshwari.

Increase in area under Irrigation

*209. SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) what is the increase in the land area under irrigation during the last three years;

(b) whether Government are having any short-term plan for the extension of irrigation facilities; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.